

Gerald Massey

Gerald Massey (29 May 1828 – 29 October 1907) was an English poet and self-educated Egyptologist. He was born near Tring, Hertfordshire in England.

Biography

Massey's parents were poor. When little more than a child, he was made to work hard in a silk factory, which he afterward deserted for the equally laborious occupation of straw plaiting. These early years were rendered gloomy by much distress and deprivation, against which the young man strove with increasing spirit and virility, educating himself in his spare time, and gradually cultivating his innate taste for literary work. He was attracted by the movement known as Christian Socialism, into which he threw himself with whole-hearted vigour, and so became associated with Maurice and Kingsley.^[1]

"During the later years of his life, (from about 1870 onwards) Massey became interested increasingly in Egyptology and the similarities that exist between ancient Egyptian mythology and the Gospel stories. He studied the extensive Egyptian records housed in the British Museum, eventually teaching himself to decipher the hieroglyphics."^[2]



Photograph of Gerald Massey dated 1856

Writing career

Massey's first public appearance as a writer was in connection with a journal called the *Spirit of Freedom*, of which he became editor, and he was only twenty-two when he published his first volume of poems, *Voices of Freedom and Lyrics of Love* (1850). These he followed in rapid succession with *The Ballad of Babe Christabel* (1854), *War Waits* (1855), *Havelock's March* (1860), and *A Tale of Eternity* (1869).

In 1889, Massey collected the best of the contents of these volumes, with additions, into a two-volume edition of his poems called *My Lyrical Life*. He also published works dealing with Spiritualism, the study of Shakespeare's sonnets (1872 and 1890), and theological speculation. It is generally understood that he was the original of George Eliot's Felix Holt.^[1]

Massey's poetry has a certain rough and vigorous element of sincerity and strength which easily accounts for its popularity at the time of its production. He treated the theme of Sir Richard Grenville before Tennyson thought of using it, with much force and vitality. Indeed, Tennyson's own praise of Massey's work is still its best eulogy, for the Laureate found in him a poet of fine lyrical impulse, and of a rich half-Oriental imagination. The inspiration of his poetry is a combination of his vast knowledge based on travels, research and experiences; he was a patriotic humanist to the core. His poem "The Merry, Merry May" was set to music in a popular song by composer Christabel Baxendale.

In regard to Egyptology, Massey first published *The Book of the Beginnings*, followed by *The Natural Genesis*. His most prolific work is *Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World*, published shortly before his death.^[1] His work, which draws comparisons between the Judeo-Christian religion and the Egyptian religion, is not considered significant in the field of modern Egyptology and is not mentioned in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* or similar reference works of modern Egyptology.^[3]

Massey was a believer in spiritual evolution; he claimed that Darwin's theory of evolution was incomplete without spiritualism:

The theory contains only one half the explanation of man's origins and needs spiritualism to carry it through and complete it. For while this ascent on the physical side has been progressing through myraids of ages, the Divine descent has also been going on – man being spiritually an incarnation from the Divine as well as a human development from the animal creation. The cause of the development is spiritual. Mr. Darwin's theory does not in the least militate against ours – we think it necessitates it; he simply does not deal with our side of the subject. He can not go lower than the dust of the earth for the matter of life; and for us, the main interest of our origin must lie in the spiritual domain.^[4]

Claimed parallels between Horus and Jesus

One of the more sensational aspects of Massey's writings were the parallels he drew between the Christian god Jesus of Nazareth and the Egyptian god Horus. These comparisons are primarily contained in his book *The Natural Genesis*. Massey's writings on this subject have influenced various later authors such as Alvin Boyd Kuhn, Tom Harpur, and Acharya S.^[5]

Some of the similarities that Massey claimed existed are that they both

1. Were born of virgins on December 25
2. Taught in a temple as a child at age 12
3. Were teachers who had 12 Disciples
4. Were baptized in a river
5. Gave a sermon on the mount
6. Healed the sick
7. Raised men from the dead (El-Asar-Us for Horus, Lazarus for Jesus)
8. Died by crucifixion
9. Were resurrected three days later.^[6]

Criticism from scholars

W. Ward Gasque, a Ph.D from Harvard and Manchester University conducted a international poll of twenty Egyptologists - including Professor Kenneth Kitchen of the University of Liverpool and Ron Leprohan, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Toronto - in Canada, US, UK, Australia, Germany, and Austria to verify academic support for these claims. The scholars were unanimous in dismissing the claims.^[7]

References

- [1] Massey, Gerald. "Gerald Massey" (http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Gerald_Massey). Classic Encyclopedia World Wide Web edition, based on the 1911 encyclopædia... Retrieved 2008-03-19.
- [2] Gerald Massey Collection-Upper Norwood Joint Library
- [3] The Leading Religion Writer in Canada ... Does He Know What He's Talking About? (<http://hnn.us/articles/6641.html>)
- [4] Gerald Massey, Concerning evolution, p. 55
- [5] Parallels between the Lives of Jesus and Horus, an Egyptian God (http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_jcpa5.htm)
- [6] Massey, Gerald. *The Natural Genesis*. Cosimo Classics, 2007.
- [7] Gasque, W. Ward "The Leading Religion Writer in Canada ... Does He Know What He's Talking About?" *George Mason University's History News Network* (<http://hnn.us/articles/6641.html>)

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External links

- Ancient Egypt, Light of the World (<http://www.wisdomlib.org/egypt/book/ancient-egypt-the-light-of-the-world/index.html>), 12 books on egyptology.
 - <http://gerald-massey.org.uk>
 - Africa Within (http://www.africawithin.com/massey/gerald_massey.htm), many of Massey's articles and poems relating to Egyptology.
 - Works by or about Gerald Massey (<http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n50-44123>) in libraries (WorldCat catalog)
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